

sons for many generations. Similarly, the Hargrave family had long been in the city as blacksmiths and prospered for many generations until the advent of the automobile age made their trade obsolete.¹¹ However, unlike the Hargraves, skilled artisans and tradesmen whose professions included plumbers and tailors, would persist in the city as it evolved into the modern age.

Another group of workers, those who worked in retail, service, and restaurant occupations, would lead the African American community into the twentieth century. These workers were most often self-employed and entrepreneurial, working as barbers, grocers and butchers but also were supported by others who worked as boot and shoemakers, hostlers, provisions

dealers, and sales clerks. The food or restaurant business was an integral part of the industrial city, providing meals for workers through a variety of facilities known as cook-shops, eating houses, or restaurants.¹² Some of these shops were located in close proximity to the business district in order to serve the lunchtime needs of workers.

Government workers were relatively few in 1897 (39), and the number changed over time because the campaign of 1898 specifically targeted those types of employees. These types of jobs included postal workers, who were appointed through the patronage system, and city and county employees who worked the police, health, and fire departments.



Washerwoman, 1920s
Image: New Hanover County Public Library



Street vendor or washwoman, 1920s
Image: New Hanover County Public Library

¹¹ For a history of some of the major builders in the city, see Bishir, "Black Builders in Antebellum North Carolina," *North Carolina Historical Review* (October 1984) and *The Bellamy Mansion, Wilmington North Carolina: An Antebellum Architectural Treasure and its People*, (Wilmington, N.C.: Preservation North Carolina, 2004); "Landmarks of Power: Building a Southern Past in Raleigh and Wilmington, North Carolina, 1885-1915" *Southern Cultures*, (2000), as well as relevant sections of Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle*. For a good history of the Hargrave family's business, see Reaves, *Strength Through Struggle* and Kenzer, *Enterprising Southerners*.

¹² Charles Fisher, in his oral history of Wilmington, recalled that before he was born in 1919 his mother would make sandwiches and pies to take by wagon to sell to the workers at the cotton compress. The workers would then pay his mother for their lunches on the weekends. The funds earned by his mother's lunches supplemented the money made by his father who worked as a wood dealer, most likely a seasonal job. Charles Fisher Oral History File, Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington, N. C.